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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 31 October 2016

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 31 octobre 2016

Standing Committee on General Government

Election Finances Statute Law
Amendment Act, 2016

Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Loi de 2016 modifiant des lois
en ce qui concerne
le financement électoral



Chair: Grant Crack
Clerk: Sylwia Przezdziecki

Président : Grant Crack
Greffeure : Sylwia Przezdziecki

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Monday 31 October 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES GOUVERNEMENTALES

Lundi 31 octobre 2016

*The committee met at 1406 in committee room 2.*ELECTION FINANCES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2016LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE FINANCEMENT ÉLECTORAL

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to election matters / Projet de loi 2, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois en ce qui a trait à des questions concernant les élections.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Good afternoon, everyone, members of the committee, the Clerks' office, Hansard, legislative research. This afternoon we are participating in the public hearings aspect for the Standing Committee on General Government. I'd like to call the committee meeting to order.

Today, we are going to discuss Bill 2, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to election matters. We have two delegations that have requested to appear before us. Each will have 10 minutes to make their presentation, followed by three minutes of questioning from each of the parties.

I do have a request to open a window. Is there any chance that we could have a window open at some point?

Interjection: No.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): No? Okay. We'll work on that once we get going.

Without further ado, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome—sorry, before I do, Ms. Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Chair. Just a question about the deadline: When did the notice go out to the public pertaining to these meetings? Can you just clarify it, please, Clerk?

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): I defer to the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Sylwia Przezdziecki): The committee met on Wednesday and the notice would have gone out on Thursday morning.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thursday morning. So there were two days really, then, to call delegations to this committee. And is it ongoing? Is it still open? Could we take delegations from the floor?

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): There are two days that are scheduled for public hearings. Tomorrow is open, obviously; it's too late today, I would imagine, based on the agreement that we had, but tomorrow would

be a day that—if we're not receiving anything, I would cancel that meeting.

Interjection: Tomorrow?

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Sorry, on Wednesday. So tomorrow, we would have to know if there's anyone coming forward for Wednesday.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay. So just for clarification, tomorrow until 5 o'clock delegations can register for Wednesday at 4 o'clock?

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): That was not what was agreed to, but if the committee agrees to it and we can get unanimous consent that we could open it up, anyone interested by tomorrow at 5 p.m. could appear on Wednesday from 4 till 6.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Just on this point, please, Chair: We did argue extensively last Wednesday, as you know, to have the Chief Electoral Officer come before this committee for at least an hour—that was denied; to push back the dates at least an additional week, and that was denied by the government side.

At the very least, committee members should keep the window of opportunity open as long as possible now that we have these set dates. This is a substantive change to the way election finances are done in the province of Ontario, and we only had our briefing last Wednesday morning. It's the first time we saw these amendments. So I would encourage the government side of the House to at least keep the window of opportunity open as long as possible so that we can hear from as many people as possible.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): I want to thank you for your comments. There was a decision and clear direction provided by the committee at the last meeting. As such, with all due respect, I would like to be able to follow the agenda. We can continue the discussion on how to proceed following the last delegation today.

Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I don't see where it puts a cut-off date for time for witnesses. It doesn't, and that was the intention—that it would only be if it was filled up that we would have to look at something else. So it would certainly be quite in order.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): What was agreed to was a first-come, first-served basis. Having said that, I would be very happy to entertain further discussion after we deal with the two delegations that are here before us today.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Just for clarification, the motion—

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Mr. Hillier.

Mr. Randy Hillier: —by the committee has no cut-off time. So anybody who does make a request, because there is no cut-off time—the only cut-off time is for written submissions, not for deputations. In the absence of specific instructions, we have an obligation to hear anybody who requests to appear before this committee, even if they come from the floor this afternoon.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): We're going to continue with the agenda. I would like to welcome, from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Mr. Warren Smokey Thomas, who is the president. Mr. Thomas, you have 10 minutes for your presentation. Welcome. And if you wanted to introduce your guest—

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Yes. Clarke Eaton, special assistant to the president.

Good afternoon. I'm Smokey Thomas. I'm president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to talk about Bill 2 and, in particular, about the amendments the government has put forward.

I have to say, it seems like every time I turn around, there's a new rule proposed or an old one scrapped. I have to applaud all of you committee members for even keeping up-to-date on what you're debating each day.

That said, we were glad to see the Liberals announce that they would be making amendments to their first attempt at these reforms. As I mentioned in the spring, and as we laid out in our recommendations to the committee following first reading, there were some real problems there. So, as I said, I was glad to hear the Liberals promise changes.

Unfortunately, now that I've seen those changes, I'm hard-pressed to find improvements. The changes do nothing to address the biggest flaw in this bill: its attempt to gag the public and prevent us from speaking about important issues between elections. And they do nothing to address the issue that started this whole conversation: the need to stop cabinet ministers from calling up stakeholders, asking them what they'd like to see done, and then asking them for a donation.

When it comes to third-party advertising, this bill continues to propose a set of restrictions on speech between elections that just don't work. You don't have to take my word for it. This issue was also identified by the man who will be speaking to you next: the Chief Electoral Officer. As I recall, at the end of the committee's travels, the Chief Electoral Officer appeared before you and recommended that "between elections, issue advertising should not be regulated." This is the same position that OPSEU takes, and for good reason. We have a strong tradition of participating in issue campaigns—

campaigns that aren't designed to elect a particular party, but to draw attention to an important public issue.

Let me tell you about a handful of the campaigns—and it's just a handful of the campaigns—that OPSEU has been involved with so far this year:

We stood with community and municipal leaders to raise awareness about the impacts of the loss of Service-Ontario centres in communities across the province, leading to a decision to review the plan to close those offices.

We worked with eight organizations to hold a conference that brought together researchers looking at the health impacts of alcohol use so that the province could make informed decisions knowing both the revenues and the costs associated with alcohol sales.

Our members joined parents terrified about the potential impacts of losing funding for their autistic children; and we worked to raise awareness about the too-long-ignored needs of front-line workers diagnosed with PTSD as a result of their work.

Some of these interventions involved spending money on advertising and others didn't. Some led to legislative changes, some improved workplace conditions and others just added new perspectives to the public conversation around an issue. But no matter the outcome, they all share a common feature: Under the current design of this bill, they would be restricted if an election was planned, even if that election was six months away.

This isn't an abstract issue for my members, either. The government is moving the fixed election date to June. That means that every four years, a provincial budget will be introduced that we won't be allowed to talk about. For a union that represents 130,000 people whose jobs and livelihoods are directly impacted by those budgets, that's a real problem. Let me just say that again, because it's important: Under this bill, every four years, we won't be able to talk about the impacts of the provincial budget.

Let me be clear: I agree with the principle. I do think there should be limits on third-party advertising. I don't want to see deep-pocketed corporations or individuals buying elections through political action committees the way we see south of the border, where millions of dollars in attack ads can be used to personally attack leaders or candidates. But in your attempts to avoid this situation, you've cast the net too wide. There's an important difference here that this law misses.

When we called for provincial action on PTSD, we didn't tell the public not to vote for Kathleen Wynne, Patrick Brown or Andrea Horwath, and we didn't tell them to vote for any of them, either. We simply joined members of the public to call for action on an issue that mattered to them. As a result, those workers now have the support they need.

This kind of communication about issues shouldn't be stopped, it should be encouraged. We need our government to listen more, not gag those who speak up for their communities. Yet it's interesting to see who these amendments don't silence. Despite numerous articles in

the press, presentations from members of the public and even criticism from former cabinet ministers, these amendments continue to allow ministers to fundraise from their stakeholders.

While distracting the public with loud promises of banning all MPPs and candidates from attending fundraising events, these amendments are careful to do nothing to stop ministers from fundraising from people who have a vested interest in their decisions. Despite Liberal promises, these amendments entirely miss the point. The problem isn't where ministers are leaning on the people who want things from them; it's the fact that they're doing it at all.

Whether it happens at an event, in person or over the phone, when a minister asks someone what they want done and then follows that up with a request for a donation to the next campaign, it's pretty easy for anyone to see the conflict that's created. It creates an assumption that donating will increase the chance of getting the desired decision. Every cabinet minister knows that; it's the whole reason they ask for the donation.

In the end, they're lying to someone. Either they're lying to the donor and letting them believe that the donation will help, or they're lying to the public when they say that donations don't affect their decisions. They can't have it both ways.

It's not a complicated issue and it's not a complicated fix. In fact, the rules to address it already exist south of the border in many states. There is a simple rule around pay-to-play donations. If you donate to a political party, you're banned from receiving benefits in return: no government contracts, no targeted tax breaks and no corporate subsidies. By using the same rule here, you can remove the conflict of interest from the situation entirely. People who want to donate to support a party or a candidate will still be able to do so, without the public thinking they're getting special treatment. Ministers will still be able to ask for support, but with no worry of looking like they're giving something in return.

This is an important bill to get right. People need to be able to trust that their democracy doesn't come with a cover charge, but is open to all. There's still time to fix the problems that remain. I hope you listen to what the presenters who spoke in the summer, and all those who will come before you this week, have to say, and give us a set of rules that truly do level the playing field for all.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here, and I'll take your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you very much, Mr. Thomas.

We'll start with the official opposition. Mr. Hillier.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Warren, for being here today and once again presenting to this committee.

In your presentation, you ask a question—that it's important to get this bill right. People need to be able to trust that their democracy doesn't come with a cover charge, but is open to all. I want to ask you, do you trust this government, under this bill or even the present legislation, to act with integrity and act with high ethical

standards when it comes to cash-for-access and political contributions?

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Mr. Smokey Thomas: No, I do not.

Mr. Randy Hillier: You don't; you don't trust them.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: No.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Do you think that is a sentiment that is widespread through your labour union?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: In the circles I travel in my union, yes, that's a widely held sentiment, but I don't know about the labour movement in general.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's absolutely a terrible indictment on our democracy if people don't have trust in elected representatives, in my view.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Yes, I would agree with that view.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Mr. Thomas, you've put in here that there's a simple fix to end the pay-for-play donations. If you donate to a political party, you ought to be banned from receiving benefits in return. I agree with that, and I know the Progressive Conservative caucus agrees with that. We know and recognize that political parties need a funding mechanism. They need to be able to raise funds to engage in the political process, but it's to engage in the political process, not to hand out political favours and contracts. I'm glad that you've been here. I'm glad that you made those presentations earlier this summer as well.

It can also be seen that these amendments that the government has proposed will actually limit further democratic participation; that independents and smaller parties will be disadvantaged in their ability to engage in the process. Have you got any comments on that?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Yes. In my mind, I think it's challengeable under the Charter of Rights freedom of speech. My union would certainly consider that if they pass this thing in the form it's in right now.

I don't see how any government claiming to be democratic in nature could say to any group, "Well, you can't talk about an issue after we've dropped the writ." They could do a budget—I spoke against their budget the last time. In 2018, they could do a budget, and if the rules say you can't talk about that budget, that's not democratic. I've got a lot of things to say about a lot of budgets and a lot of things to say about a lot of issues. To stifle public opinion on any issue is just plain wrong.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you very much. We shall move to Ms. Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Mr. Thomas, for coming once again in front of the committee. Thank you for raising the issue of government advertising. We tried very hard to push back on the government's leniency on partisan advertising. There's widespread support for that change across the province. It's an insult to many people who have watched those commercials. I also want to thank you for making an issue around budget timing and the ability for stakeholders to weigh in on that budget.

For us, we've called this a little bit of a bait and switch, because it doesn't address the core issue, which

you did bring to us in the original delegation—that there's a fundamental conflict of interest ministers have when they're meeting with stakeholders outside of business hours behind closed doors for high fees. Do you want to comment on that? Because I really do need us to be very clear that this bill does not fundamentally address those core concerns that ordinary citizens saw affecting their lives.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: If you're going to fix it, you have to stop that practice. My union members or the average citizen will never be able to come up with \$100,000 or \$5,000. Most people couldn't even come up with 50 bucks to go have a dinner with somebody. But the ones behind closed doors where you're paying goodness knows how much—I've heard rumours of \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$15,000—there's definitely, definitely a perception of conflict of interest, and I would say there is a conflict of interest. If you're going to give a whole lot of money, you're going to expect something in return. You've got to stop that.

You want to stifle the average person from speaking out on an issue, but you want to let the rich ones or the elites continue to buy access.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I don't know if you saw the question that I asked the minister on Thursday, but I asked him about—we technically, if this bill passes, cannot attend a fundraiser in our own name, yet \$1,200 is still the max, and there's a component of Bill 2 that still lets any politician of any stripe go through their Rolodex and call, email or use other means to solicit funds up to that \$1,200. Now the minister, I guess, was very confused at the time, because he referenced our Vision Dinner, but he forgot to mention his \$2-million dinner that they are fundraising.

This is as of January 1, 2017, that this would come into play. Politicians can't attend, but staff can. Political staffers can still be at those fundraisers.

Do you have any concerns about pushing this entire practice underground, from a political staffing position?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Yes, because a staffer can't be fired by the voters, right?

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's right.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: You can go there, you can lobby, you could do anything you want—and it really does push it underground, because how do you get at it? They're not well known to the public. They might be known to reporters. But it definitely drives it underground.

I don't believe that was the intent of the original bill. I think the original bill was to clean things up and make it transparent, and that sure doesn't make it transparent.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you very much. We'll move on to the government side. Mr. Berardinetti.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Thomas, for being here today. This is the second time we're doing the public hearings. We did this before, and I think our government is trying to get it right. I just have a couple of questions, if I have the time.

The first one: In your previous presentation, you mentioned that you didn't want donations. You agreed with not getting donations from corporations or from unions. Do you still agree with that?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Yes, I still agree with that. Cut them all out.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Can you just elaborate a bit?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: I beg your pardon?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Can you just elaborate on why you don't think it's right?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Well, I like the notion of the per-vote, whatever you get per vote—the public funding, so to speak. But it shouldn't be based on the last election; it should be based on a different formula.

No, I just don't think that unions with deep pockets—my union, we spend money on the elections, but basically on issues and begging people to go vote. Other unions actually put it into things like the Working Families coalition or direct donations. I just don't think that's right. I think they should be stopped.

Everything should count. Book-off times and all those sorts of things should count toward the maximum.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Okay. I think, after you're finished, the next presenter will be the Chief Electoral Officer. He has mentioned already that this is the biggest overhaul of the election finance system in the last 40 years.

You made some remarks about not trusting the government and not getting it right. We're listening and we're trying to get it right. As I said, this is our second time here doing presentations, and we'll do some more on Wednesday. Then we're going to go through clause-by-clause and see what happens then.

Don't you agree that at least we're making some attempt to change an old bill? I mean, we're going through a second time with hearings. We all agree with that, on the government side: to have it as open as possible. Don't you agree that at least this is an overhaul?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Well, you should be careful of what you ask me. Yes, it's an overhaul, but I think you're trying to overhaul it to suit yourselves and not the two opposition parties or the public that may want to—

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Can I just say one thing? Did you know that the opposition parties have held their own private fundraisers? The leaders have done that as well. When Mike Harris was in power, for example, he did the same thing supposedly that we're doing: so-called "buying access." I don't know if you know that as well.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Well, Mike Harris isn't here now, and if he did it, he shouldn't have done it. It's pretty simple.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: At least we're making an attempt to try to change it—because they're doing it still. You can buy access to the opposition leader or to the leader of the third party.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: All I would ask is that you make the playing field level, you make it transparent and you make it fair to everybody, and that nobody gets un-

due advantage. Every person in this province has one vote, and that one vote should count and that one vote should count in how you fundraise and how you run the electioneering. I would encourage everybody to listen to the advice of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Yes, he's coming up next.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you very much, gentlemen, for coming before committee this afternoon. It's much appreciated.

1430

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Next on the agenda we have our Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Greg Essensa.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Sorry, Mr. Berardinetti, what's the question?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm looking for unanimous consent here for each caucus to ask questions of Mr. Essensa, the Chief Electoral Officer, for up to 10 minutes following his presentation to the committee. So instead of five minutes, each side gets 10 minutes to ask questions.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Okay, so the original motion is nine minutes in total, which would be—I try to be fair—three each, and you're asking for unanimous consent to make it 10 minutes.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Yes, actually, 10 minutes per caucus.

Interjection: Agreed.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): It's agreed.

Again, Mr. Essensa, we welcome you and Mr. Batty before committee this afternoon. The floor is yours. You have 10 minutes, followed by 10 and 10, and I might be a little lenient on the 10, I guess.

Mr. Greg Essensa: Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of committee. I am joined by Mr. Jonathan Batty, my general counsel, with me today. Thank you for inviting me to provide my comments to you on Bill 2 following its referral to this committee on October 4, 2016.

I welcome the chance to offer my insights and advice on the electoral process to you. When I present before a committee of the House, I am very aware that I am addressing Ontario's lawmakers.

My office is entrusted with the public responsibility of administering elections in a fair and impartial manner. Earlier this year, I compared my role to that of a referee. As an election official for over thirty years, I have always "called it like I see it." I do the same thing when I appear in committee.

I would like to again thank the members of this committee for the opportunity I had earlier this year to be an adviser as they considered an earlier version of this bill.

Today, I would briefly like to address these topics: (1) public expectations; (2) the provisions of this bill; and (3) the way ahead.

Earlier, in September of this year, I was invited to speak before the parliamentary committee that is travelling the country to hear from Canadians about electoral reform. I'd like to share with you some of the thoughts I shared with the MPs on the committee. I said to them that I think Canada is at a watershed moment as we consider whether or not to adopt a new voting system in federal elections.

I also said this to you in the spring: Our province is at a watershed moment. The Legislative Assembly, in addition to the redesigning of our election finance laws, is now going to be considering major changes to the administration of elections with the introduction of Bill 45 two weeks ago. I hope to share my thoughts on that legislation when the time comes.

Today, though, I would like to talk about election finance reform in Ontario. It is a topic that has attracted public attention and I know opinions among members of this committee are divided on some issues. I respect there may be differences of opinion on important policy questions. I also know that MPPs keep the interests of citizens at the forefront when they deliberate.

I would like to reiterate something I said to the parliamentary committee a few weeks ago: I recognize that legislative debate, by necessity, may involve the sharp clash of ideas. I believe citizens expect and encourage this from their lawmakers. However, I also believe that citizens want partisan rancour and short-term political self-interest to be set aside when their election laws are written.

Election laws are supposed to put the interests of electors first. This simple proposition upholds the principle of responsible government. As Chief Justice McLachlin noted in a landmark voting rights case, "The power of lawmakers flows from the voting citizens, and lawmakers act as the citizens' proxies. This delegation from voters to legislators gives the law its legitimacy or force."

Mr. Mayrand, the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, said a few weeks ago to the federal committee on electoral reform that consensus is an important ingredient to make successful changes.

I also believe that consensus is important and can be achieved through debate in a Legislature, an election, a referendum or some other process. To do so, however, takes effort on the part of all parties.

This spring, when I came before this committee, I talked about the enduring legacy of the Camp commission and how it achieved political consensus on a number of important election finance reforms. That commission succeeded where, two years earlier, in 1970, the assembly's Select Committee on Election Laws wasn't able to do so. Our province learned the lesson in the early 1970s that the public's expectation for progress will not be diminished, even where policy solutions are caught in a no man's land between diverging political positions.

CEO Mayrand spoke to you in the summer of the need to do what is right for electors. When it comes to making recommendations on the substance of election laws, I can

tell you that chief electoral officers think long and hard before doing so. Unlike government and opposition legislators, who may be focused on the immediacy of an upcoming election, election administrators take a more inclusive and long-term view.

Let me now turn to the provisions of this bill, as they have been amended, or not, as the case may be. In calling it like I see it, let me reiterate the guiding principle that an electoral system will be legitimate if, in putting the needs of the electorate first, it maintains a level playing field. All participants vying for public support or attention during an election should compete on an equal footing.

The concept of the level playing field must be applied in all aspects of elections, both in voting rules and campaign finance rules. This guiding principle is informed by the three foundational requirements: integrity, fairness and transparency.

In reviewing the provisions of this bill, I asked myself whether the change protects the integrity of the electoral process, preserves fairness and promotes transparency. I have provided a short written summary of my comments on the specific policies in the bill but will take a moment to make a few observations.

I am disappointed that many of my recommendations concerning the regulation of third parties have not been heeded. I think the provisions of the bill have not gone far enough. However, I would be glad to be proven wrong if these provisions correct the imbalance I have cautioned you about. I will be sure to report to the House on these matters in the years to come.

I am happy that an annual allowance has been introduced for parties. I look forward to reviewing the details of the allowance system being proposed for constituency associations.

I am very glad to see there was significant progress in updating spending and contribution limits, but I am disappointed that special self-funding contribution limits are now permitted.

I am glad to see that it is now treated as a contribution if employers pay their employees who are absent from their workplace to work on a campaign. This addresses a long-standing issue. However, I am surprised that travel, research and polling remain expenses that are not subject to any spending limit. I believe that sets us apart from the federal rules, and I am not sure why this exception is being maintained.

I am also glad that some of the technical recommendations I made have been addressed in respect of group contributions and the outdated provisions concerning foundations.

As a technical matter, I strongly recommend this committee revisit the nomination contest provisions, as the implications for local-level nomination races may not have been clearly understood. The model differs significantly from the provisions adopted federally, which better reflect the practical realities of the local-level candidate selection process.

I do hope that all parties reconsider these provisions. If enacted in their present form, coupled with the changes to the candidate nomination and registration process recently proposed in Bill 45, my office will need six months to implement these changes after the law comes into effect. I would ask the committee to consider a motion to allow these particular provisions to take effect July 1, 2017.

I would also like to comment on the proposals that I am advised will be introduced concerning how fund-raising activities will be conducted and who can attend such events. My office is reviewing these provisions now. We were not consulted in advance on these provisions, and I have few answers for you today about them. As far as I know, they are unique in North America.

If these provisions are enacted, my office will be diligent in implementing them. I hope all parties try to adhere to the spirit and plain language of the provisions, rather than looking for loopholes or interpretative exceptions to these new rules. I will be sure to report to the House in the years to come as to how these requirements, if they are enacted, are observed.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to speak for a moment about the way ahead. Bill 2 is still working its way through the legislative process. For several years, I proposed that an expert commission be appointed to make recommendations on the issues this committee is trying to address. No commission was established, but I was invited to sit with the committee to provide its members my advice.

This is the last time I will be before you as this bill heads through hearings, motions and into third reading. This is the last advice I offer in my presentation. I am hoping the committee can come together and agree on at least some of the measures that need to be adopted. I think Ontarians share my hope.

As I said at the outset of my remarks today, I believe election administrators take a more inclusive and long-term view of legislative changes than political partisans may in the heat of a contentious debate or an election.

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I think citizens recognize and listen to what their election administrators recommend. I think the public questions when, without adequate explanation, those recommendations are not reflected in our election laws.

I want to congratulate the committee on its work to date and hope that it further considers implementing some of my recommendations.

I thank you for inviting me to speak to you today and I'm happy to answer any of your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you very much, Mr. Essensa. Well done and well timed.

We shall start with the third party, Ms. Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Essensa, for coming once again.

I think your last comments speak volumes to us, because we did start this process in the spirit of a genuine sense of collaboration. It was an open slate for us to address third-party advertising, issue-based advocacy,

government advertising and conflict-of-interest guidelines.

Next to you and the comments you have made to this committee, the Integrity Commissioner, for me, stands out the most, because he is very clearly in a position where he cannot hold members to a certain level of integrity on fundraising, and Bill 2, unfortunately, does not change that, nor do the amendments, in our view.

I know this has been increasingly very difficult, actually, for all committee members. It has moved forward in a way that, certainly as a New Democrat, and I'm sure as the PC Party will tell you, we are in a different place than I think anyone expected. You will remember as we were going through clause-by-clause that a press release was dropped down into the committee banning all politicians from all fundraising.

I will be upfront. The people in my riding have asked me many, many questions about what this is going to look like, because it is unprecedented. You make this comment in your deputation as well.

So I have many questions for you. I wish we had more time with you. I want you to know that the PCs tried for two hours; I tried for one hour. I'm happy to have the 10 extra minutes versus three minutes, but—this will be transformative, but it might not be transformative in a good way for us, and substantive.

There have been lots of questions about why these amendments were not originally included in Bill 2 for an open debate by all parliamentarians in the province of Ontario—because we are still a parliamentary democracy, right?

My question for you specifically is under—I think it's amendment 2, and it has to do with saving. I'm sure this came as a bit of a surprise for you, because it certainly came as a surprise to us. If we attend—okay, so we're not attending, in theory, as a politician, a fundraiser. It's more of a friend-raiser. Okay? That should be interesting for you to police—but it's okay if we do it just on a cost-recovery basis.

So this would be under (2)(a). It says here, "where a charge by the sale of tickets or otherwise is made exclusively to recover the cost of holding the event, and where any money raised in excess of the amount required for cost recovery is promptly paid to the Chief Electoral Officer." I mean, this must be the first time that anyone's ever sent money your way that you didn't ask for. And (b) under the same part is "soliciting contributions by mail, telephone, electronic communication or other means."

So if we hold a friend-raiser and someone has an extra plate of spaghetti or doesn't eat an extra meatball or has an extra serving, there will be money in excess, and that money will be coming to you. One, I'd like to you to comment on that money.

Two, and probably more importantly, it still allows us as politicians to solicit contributions by mail, telephone, electronic communication or other means. I would very much like for you to comment on that piece, because that still is a concern to us, please.

Mr. Greg Essensa: Thank you very much for the question. This will be the answer that I likely give to all members of this committee on this question.

First and foremost, my office was not consulted on the substance of these amendments prior to them being put in place. The first time my office saw them was Wednesday, the same time the general public did.

We recognize at Elections Ontario that there is a significant amount of work for us to do. We need to develop manuals that explain how chief financial officers are to comply with the new requirements governing these types of events. We likely need to provide some direction to MPPs, develop some guidelines for them, as well as how they are going to comply from an attendance perspective.

But I will say this to the committee: I'm reluctant to offer my opinion on the particular provisions or how they are to work, as we had no advance notice of these provisions. I learned of them at the same time that you did. The provisions are complex, and they appear to include important threshold requirements and exceptions. I do not want to speculate, because I could inadvertently provide you and the House incorrect information.

We did not draft these provisions, and I would recommend to this committee that those specific questions on these provisions are more aptly directed to the ministry policy staff or legislative counsel who were involved in drafting them, because at this early date, I can't comment to you specifically on those.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Okay. I don't want to put you in an uncomfortable position, but this is pretty unprecedented. Your office is primarily at the centre of this, where you are going to be almost like the parent figure, if you will, going forward, to 122 politicians.

There are all sorts of complications with this. Had we been able to actually have a full process where we could ask a lot of questions around one-year oversight, potentially also your staffing needs to do this—I must tell you, I did joke in my briefing that the extra \$3.50 from my fundraiser may go to your office, and I don't think that's going to buy you many staffing resources.

Ultimately, the goal was to push out these fundraising practices into the open and make them more transparent from all parties; right? There was a need for clarity. Aside from the fact that we, of course, felt very strongly that a minister in a boardroom on Bay Street had a lot more impact and influence on government policy than I did in my fundraisers that I have—because all of us fundraise. We're very clear about that.

Do you think that, as Bill 2 is crafted, and as the two amendments sit before you, it addresses the problem we all sought to address, which is to create a very open and transparent political fundraising system for the province of Ontario?

Mr. Greg Essensa: I'm honestly not sure I can answer that question. Since we became aware of these provisions last Wednesday, we have done a search. We are not aware of any other campaign finance regulator in North America having to administer rules like these.

In the weeks to come, we intend to consult with our colleagues not only across this country, but across North America. If there are other rules that are similar to these and how they actually administer them—because they are, quite frankly, unique. They put us in a position where we will have to clearly review guidelines; review our ability to provide advice and guidance to MPPs, candidates, political parties and campaign finance officers and provide them guidelines and recommendations.

Quite simply, not having been consulted on these provisions and them only introduced last Wednesday, I'm not in a position to provide specific advice on these provisions at this particular time.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I appreciate that. Perhaps we can comment on what is missing from the act? I'm not sure if you know this, but I have raised a number of complaints with the Integrity Commissioner around political staffers soliciting fundraising from ministry and industry-specific stakeholders. Now, quite honestly, I know those complaints are going to come back without any progress because the Integrity Commissioner has really no grounds. Right now, it's left up to us to police each other as MPPs.

Do you have any thoughts on the fact that these two amendments and the act do not address the fact that political staffers are potentially now in a heightened and more powerful position to fundraise on behalf of politicians, who will not be the face of their fundraiser anymore?

1450

Mr. Greg Essensa: I have concerns on how these provisions will be administered, but I am not at the point where I would make specific notations on what those are. Until we understand more clearly how we are going to administer them and how that is going to operationalize itself, it would be premature for me to provide specific advice on that.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you. I guess that's a procedural question for us, then. We only have two delegations today. It's a very short timeline. I'm not sure who we'll hear from on Wednesday, and then we go to clause-by-clause the following sessional day. We are going to be looking to try to make it a better piece of legislation. I hope you'll be able to participate or offer feedback in a formal way to all parties, going forward, by that point. It's true that you don't have a lot of time.

The other issue we did try to address in the original Bill 201 prior to prorogation, now Bill 2, was around travel, research and polling. You say, "I am surprised that travel, research and polling remain expenses that are not subject to any spending limit. I believe that sets us apart from the federal rules." Is there any good rationale or explanation for why we would not address this? The federal government has successfully brought in changes in this regard. This is really off-the-books money. This is as far in the backroom as you can possibly get, and quite honestly, not all the parties have the same resources to do that.

You've weighed in on this, so I think that this is fair ground to ask you.

Mr. Greg Essensa: Absolutely. I have commented twice to this committee on my belief that polling, research and travel—if this committee and the Legislature are going to adhere to the principle of a level playing field, I quite honestly do not see why those three components are not included as part of the spending limit. I think it does set apart the parties that have more resources to them, and it creates an imbalance.

In my role as Chief Electoral Officer, I have to be cognizant of all 21 political parties in the province of Ontario. I don't see a rationale for why these three components are not included as part of the spending limit.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

We'll move to the government side. Mr. Rinaldi.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you for being here again—you're becoming a permanent fixture—and thank you for travelling with us this summer and for being here today. Although maybe everything is not addressed as we chatted, I would hope or express my sentiment that your comments and suggestions to the committee are certainly being appreciated, at least for me, and I'm sure I can speak on behalf of the committee because you bring that expertise.

The question I want you to maybe elaborate on—and it could be on these notes that you included; I just didn't have time to look at them. The individual donation maximums or limits to a party or candidate and association is \$33,250, as it stands now. You suggest that these should be lowered. Now we have a recommendation based on the bill, if it goes through, that donation limits are reduced to \$3,600 in an election year. That's almost a 90% reduction from the current system.

Can you comment on if that's a fair number, and you agree with it or disagree with it? Should it have gone further or should it have been less? Maybe if you could share some comments.

Mr. Greg Essensa: Sure. When I first appeared before the committee, in my opening submission to you, I explained my view towards the combination of public financing and a reduction in the contribution limits. In my comments today, when I indicated that in my 30-plus years of running elections, I've tended to call it like I see it—I actually see this as a progressive step. I had recommended \$5,000. The amendments have lowered it down to \$3,600. It is more in line with the federal contribution limits, and I think that's appropriate. Combined with the annual subsidy, I think that makes a significant step forward towards our campaign financing rules.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Following that comment, the subsidy from government that you've suggested—and we're proposing to go through with it. The federal folks have slowly eliminated it. Do you recommend that in Ontario it should be permanent? Or should we follow our federal—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speak into to the microphone.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Oh, I'm sorry.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I tried.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You tried.

Mr. Greg Essensa: I did recommend in my submission to you that the annual subsidy, in my opinion, should be a permanent subsidy. It should be reviewed on some regularized basis, as the legislation outlines and sets in statute. But from my perspective, there needs to be a balance between public funding and private contributions. So I am supportive of it being a permanent public funding vehicle.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you. I think my colleague has further questions here.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Ms. Malhi.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you. You've stated that the changes that are being proposed are "the most significant redesign of Ontario's election laws in more than 40 years." Do you think that the measures in this bill level the playing field and provide people more equal access to the political system?

Mr. Greg Essensa: As I said in my comments today, I call it like I see it. I think there are some very progressive steps in the bill that, as I indicated in my comments, I am happy to see. I think there is an opportunity for this committee and for the Legislature as a whole to move forward, though.

There are provisions in areas that I do believe could be enhanced: third-party advertising; the question I was previously asked on research, travel and polling. I think there is still opportunity for this committee to, in fact, get closer to "levelling the playing field."

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Ms. Hoggarth.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you for your presentation and thank you very much for attending all the hearings with us.

This bill contains a proposal to offer a per-vote allowance to registered political parties. The amount is \$2.71 per vote. Given the related changes to fundraising rules, what are your thoughts on whether the amount is sufficient to support healthy political parties in Ontario?

Mr. Greg Essensa: In my opening commentary the first day I appeared before committee, I outlined for you how much money political parties in Ontario would be losing by eliminating contributions from corporations and trade unions. Based on the analysis that we provided, it was approximately \$50 million. My commentary to the committee and to the Legislature was that I do believe there should be a form of public financing, but the public financing regime should not enrich the parties. At the very most, it should make them whole again in the elimination of those forms of contributions.

When I look at the proposed allowance that is in the bill, it doesn't move as far as making them whole again, but I think it is an important, healthy step forward. As I indicated in my previous answer, I do believe it should be permanent and I do believe there should be some provisions set in this statute for some regularized review of it by either a parliamentary committee or a select committee.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Any other questions? Mr. Berardinetti.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Yes, I have a question to ask about government advertising, both pre-writ and during the writ. When the government spends money—and it is controlled or regulated, I should say, by the Government Advertising Act. There are restrictions in place there. This bill in front of us proposes to extend the Government Advertising Act restrictions during election campaigns so that they can apply for the 60 days before a scheduled election's writ period. Basically, it can apply for an extension, I guess, for 60 days before the election writ period comes in. I wanted to get your opinion on that, if you think that's something you would like to comment on or have an opinion on.

Mr. Greg Essensa: I would actually defer to my colleague the Auditor General, who I know appeared before this committee and who is responsible for the overseeing of that particular provision in the act. I think she is in a far better position to actually comment on the specific provisions that are articulated, and I think she has already provided advice to this committee on that. It's not within my jurisdiction to comment.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Okay. I have another question, if we have time. Again, you may want to do the same with this question, but it has to do with third-party advertising. As we know, there is third-party advertising that happens in an election period. This bill proposes to reduce third-party advertising spending limits to \$100,000 province-wide, including a limit of \$4,000 in a provincial riding. Do you think this change will help address some of the concerns that have been raised regarding a third party's influence during an election period?

1500

Mr. Greg Essensa: I think it is a slight step forward. However, I would review back to the commentary I made earlier, which I provided to this committee in my written submission.

There are several areas on third-party advertising that have not been adopted. Adoption of a definition of political advertising that would apply between elections has not been addressed. Adoption of a specific definition of election period advertising that is limited to apply to commercially purchased advertising is not addressed. Issues pertaining to stricter conflict-of-interest requirements for appointments of CFOs and apparent conflicts of interest between political parties and third parties as possible collusion amongst third parties—there are a number of areas that I've outlined that have not been addressed and I believe could be further enhanced by this committee and the Legislature to in fact strengthen the third-party advertising rules that we have here in Ontario.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Okay. We have a copy of your submission in front of us that we can look over. Is there anything else outside of those comments made that you think will make it fairer, or should we just stick to your comments that you've got written there?

Mr. Greg Essensa: Mr. Berardinetti, I would clearly look for this committee and the Legislature to strengthen third-party advertising rules. As I indicated at the very outset, we are somewhat of an outlier in this country on third-party advertising. We have seen numbers that no jurisdiction, not even federally—where third-party advertisers have had significant expenditures, and that's only what I am shown, which is a very small period of time. If we go back to the core principle of levelling the playing field, I think there's an opportunity for this committee, there's an opportunity for the Legislature to strengthen those rules, to put in place a more up-to-date standard that we could apply here in Ontario to third-party advertising.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Do I have time for one more quick question?

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Aren't you happy that you're not in the United States of America right now and trying to regulate the super PACs?

Mr. Greg Essensa: I'm actually going to the US next week for the election, so I am reserving next week.

Mr. Mike Colle: Make sure you give our best.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you very much to the government side.

Mr. Hillier, you have one minute.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Mr. Essensa, for being here once again. I want to just put on the record so everybody's aware that both opposition parties did advance motions to have you attend and provide expert advice to the committee at second reading as well, but the five Liberal members voted down all requests.

It was astonishing for me to hear that you were not consulted in any fashion by the Liberal government on these proposed amendments. We've seen the Liberal government be very dismissive of opposition MPPs. It's unsavoury to see that they would have that attitude with independent officers of Parliament as well and not ask for and request thoughts and guidance on amendments.

Listening to your comments today—I think I can maybe paraphrase them from what I heard—you had certain expectations that the election financing reforms would meet a high standard with the concept of a level playing field, that there were elements of this bill and there are elements of this bill that move election financing in that direction, but you remain disappointed on a number of elements where it has not met your standard, the expectation of there being and creating a level playing field.

I'm concerned that elements of this bill will push election financing more underground and empower the old-style backroom bagmen in political money and financing, but what I'd like to draw your attention to—I've provided every member of this committee with a four-page document on concerns surrounding nomination contestants. You've raised this, Mr. Essensa: the bill moving into the territory of nomination contestants. You provided the committee members with your concerns. I've shared that copy with you. I believe you have it. I

don't expect you to be able to respond to all these concerns immediately. I am hoping that the committee will provide an opportunity for you to address these concerns when you have the opportunity.

I want to draw your attention to two specific elements out of these four pages of concerns. One is, we do encourage and permit, and it is expected, that we take nominations from the floor for nomination contestants. My reading of the bill is that nomination contestants will have to be registered prior; we will no longer be allowed to accept nominations from the floor for candidacy in a political party. Do you have a comment on that or is it too early?

Mr. Greg Essensa: In my understanding, the provisions in Bill 2 do not regulate the voting process for nomination contests. There could be nominations from the floor. The person nominated in that case would still need to register and report, even if they have not done so yet.

My challenge with the nomination contest provision, quite honestly—I'm not sure the members or the legislators fully appreciate and understand how this will actually appear in practice. If you are a prospective candidate for a nomination contest and you decide to go and register a website under GoDaddy, just by that simple act, you now have to register with my office, get yourself a CFO, get yourself an auditor. You are now subject to all of the financial filing provisions and you're subject to the compliance reforms, whether you actually run or not. By that simple act—

Mr. Randy Hillier: So a Facebook posting would—

Mr. Greg Essensa: I think there's an imbalance in the current provisions that will make this onerous on prospective nominees. It will certainly make this onerous on our office.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Right.

Mr. Greg Essensa: When we look across the board, nomination contests—on average, in each riding, we see somewhere between three to five or three to six. All of those nominated candidates now will have substantive requirements to file financial returns with us, be subject to compliance reviews etc. I'm not sure that is the balance that the Legislature should look at.

My recommendations to this committee and to the Legislature—I believe the federal provisions are far better off and they more reflect the practical realities of political nomination contests in this country and here in Ontario.

Mr. Randy Hillier: When you say "onerous," we understand that the impact on it will be either somebody will find themselves to be in violation of the act or, if they have knowledge, the onerous element prevents them, or encourages them not to run.

Mr. Greg Essensa: That would be my fear, that it would turn people away from participating in the democratic process.

Mr. Randy Hillier: On page 3 of the note that I sent out—I just want to read this briefly. The question is: How is consolidating the maximum contribution limit to

nomination contestants and constituency associations going to be even possible to administer when one contribution is tax-receipted and the other is not, when one is audited and the other is not, when the contribution information is not even available to the CFOs of each registered entity and when the party has no authority over the separate bank accounts?

I know you haven't had a lot of time to study these, but that's in the present bill and it falls under the problems with nominations.

Are we crafting a piece of legislation that can't be implemented?

Mr. Greg Essensa: No. The challenge that is framed in this particular question is not unique. It exists today. Over-contributions, unfortunately, need to be returned, just as they are today. But it does create somewhat of an administrative burden and challenge for both party and constituency associations.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I would think, because I've had that happen in my riding—I think we all have had over-contributions. But under this scenario, I think it's not just a challenge; it becomes an administrative nightmare.

1510

Again, people will have responsibility, but they will have no ability to actually comply. I can't imagine that there would be any constituency association that had a nomination contest that wouldn't be subject to penalties under that provision.

Mr. Greg Essensa: The possibility does exist, yes, but as I've indicated today, we do deal with over-contributions. We work very closely with the parties and the constituency associations. But you're not incorrect. This is a complex issue. I think there could be clearer language that would allow these issues to be put more in the forefront and not create such consternation between constituency associations and the central parties.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes. I would like, if you have the opportunity, Mr. Essensa, to provide the committee with a response to some of these.

Mr. Greg Essensa: Sure.

Mr. Randy Hillier: If they're unfounded, that's fine. These are the concerns that have been identified to me. They certainly appear legitimate. A number of them I have experienced, which demonstrates they are legitimate.

You also mentioned it's onerous not just on the nomination contestant but the challenge is for your office to be able to actually enforce and assure compliance with the Election Act. I don't think we want to have a piece of legislation that is problematic in its compliance, especially in the Election Act. We like to have certainty that we know who is able to vote and who is permitted to vote and where they're obligated to vote. That's why we have so few regulations in the electoral act, as compared to other statutes.

If you could just indicate to this committee, in maybe calling-a-spade-a-spade language, how long you think it would take your office to get in a position where you could have effective compliance—and not out of compli-

ance because of lack of knowledge or out of compliance because of confusing language or guidelines. Everybody here in the parties that we represent—the members in our caucuses—wants to be law-abiding. We don't want to be in a position where we are outside of compliance with Elections Ontario, but I fear many more of us will be in that category.

Mr. Greg Essensa: In answer to your question, Mr. Hillier, we are currently reviewing all of the provisions in Bill 2. They do have significant implications to Elections Ontario. At the current time, we are reviewing what the resourcing implications will be, and we will be submitting to the Board of Internal Economy, as part of our annual budget submission, additional resourcing requirements based on Bill 2, because there certainly will be in its current form.

In addition, members should also remember the increased number of ridings that we have, from 107 to 122. Additionally, with the northern boundaries commission—it looks like it is part of Bill 45—we may go to as high as 124, caused by redistribution alone. This accounts for about a 15% increase in workload for Elections Ontario's compliance division.

As we review both bills, we will be submitting to the Board of Internal Economy in the new year our budgetary resource requirements, based on these new statutes.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Can I ask—

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you very much.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Just one quick question.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Well, we're at about 13 minutes already.

Mr. Randy Hillier: One quick question: Do you think it would be incumbent on this committee to hear your analysis of these proposals prior to us going to clause-by-clause or reporting the bill back to the House for third reading?

Mr. Greg Essensa: I honestly can tell you we will not be in a position, based on the timeline that you have, to provide you with a complete, fulsome review, including what resources would be required, by the end of this week. My understanding is that how this is going to clause-by-clause does not afford us that time.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Unfortunate.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you, gentlemen, for coming before committee and sharing your time with us, and your insight, this afternoon. It's much appreciated.

Mr. Greg Essensa: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): We're having some discussion as to whether or not Wednesday would be open for further delegations. There is nothing in the motion that was passed, in my opinion, that would deter anyone from coming forward, as long as they would, obviously, contact the Clerk's office. What we would require, though, is a reasonable deadline, in my opinion as Chair. So if someone would propose something like a 5 p.m.—

Mr. Randy Hillier: So 10 a.m. on Wednesday morning.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Mr. Hillier is proposing 10 a.m. Mr. Rinaldi?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Before Mr. Rinaldi, is that a reasonable time, Madam Clerk, to allow preparation on your part?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Sylwia Przezdziecki): The 10 a.m.? If the committee is suggesting that we wait until 10 a.m. before possibly cancelling if there are no requests to appear, if we keep it on the agenda or if we keep the meeting on the roster, that would seem to me—I mean, the members would all have it in their schedules and staff would have it in their

schedules. So, administratively, it would certainly be doable.

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Mr. Rinaldi?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Ten o'clock works fine with us.

The Chair (Mr. Grant Crack): Is it the consensus of the committee that 10 a.m. on Wednesday would be the deadline for other interested parties to request an appearance before this committee, which would start at 4 p.m.? There is no one opposed, so the request is granted: 10 a.m. on Wednesday, November 2.

Thank you very much, everyone, for your hard work again this afternoon. This meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1518.



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